

Lha Dhu; Or, The Dark Day eBook

Lha Dhu; Or, The Dark Day by William Carleton

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Contents

Lha Dhu; Or, The Dark Day eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	6
Page 3.....	7
Page 4.....	8
Page 5.....	9
Page 6.....	10
Page 7.....	11
Page 8.....	12
Page 9.....	13
Page 10.....	14
Page 11.....	16
Page 12.....	18
Page 13.....	20
Page 14.....	21
Page 15.....	23
Page 16.....	25
Page 17.....	26
Page 18.....	27
Page 19.....	28
Page 20.....	30
Page 21.....	31
Page 22.....	32

[Page 23.....](#) [33](#)

[Page 24.....](#) [34](#)

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
By William Carleton		1

Page 1

By William Carleton

There is no country in the world whose scenery is more sweetly diversified, or more delicately shaded away into that exquisite variety of surface which presents us with those wavy outlines of beauty that softly melt into each other, than is that of our own green island. Alas! how many deep valleys, wild glens, green meadows, and pleasant hamlets, lie scattered over the bosom of a country, peopled by inhabitants who are equally moved by the impulses of mirth and sorrow; each valley, and glen, and pleasant hamlet marked by some tearful remembrance of humble calamity of which the world never hears. How little do its proud nobility know of the fair and still beauty which marks the unbroken silence of its most delightful retreats, or of the unassuming records of love or sorrow, which pass down through a single generation, and are soon lost in the rapid stream of life. We do not love to remember sorrow, but its traces, notwithstanding, are always the most uneffaceable, and, what is strange as true, its mournful imprint remains ever the longest upon the heart that is most mirthful. We talk not now of the hollow echo, like mirth, which comes from thousands only because the soul is wanting. No; but we say that as the diamond is found in the darkness of the mine, as the lightning shoots with most vivid flashes from the gloomiest cloud, so does mirthfulness frequently proceed from a heart susceptible of the deepest melancholy. Many and true are the simple tales of Irish life which could prove this. Many a fair laughing girl who has danced in happiness, light as a mote in the sunbeam, has been suddenly left in darkness, bowed down in youth and beauty to the grave, and though the little circle of which she was the centre may have been disturbed by her untimely life, yet in brief space, except to a few yearning and stricken hearts who could not forget her who was once their pride and hope, her Memory has passed away like a solitary bird, viewed as it goes over us, and followed wistfully, by the eye, until by degrees it lessens and lessens—becomes dim—then fades into a speck, and ultimately melts into the blue distance of heaven. One such a “simple annal,” brought about by the inscrutable hand that guides the destinies of life, we are now about to present to our readers. Were it the mere creation of our fancy, it might receive many of those embellishments at our hand with which we scruple not to adorn the shadowy idealities of fiction.

It is, however, one of those distressing realities so often produced by the indulgence of vehement passion, that we are compelled by the melancholy severity of its truth to give the details of, not, alas, as we could have wished them to happen, but simply as they occurred.

Page 2

The village of *Ballydhas* was situated in the bosom of as sweet a valley as ever gladdened the eye and the heart of a man to look upon. Contentment, peace, and prosperity, walked step by step with its happy inhabitants. The people were marked by a pastoral simplicity of manners, such as is still to be found in some of the remote and secluded hamlets of Ireland. The vale was green and shelving, having its cornfields, its pasturage, and its patches of fir, poplar, and mountain-ash intermingled, and creeping up on each side in wild but quiet beauty to the very mountain tops that enclosed it. At the head of the glen reposed a small clear sheet of water, as calm and unruffled as the village itself. By this sweet lake was fed the pure stream which murmured down between the banks, here and there opened, and occasionally covered by hazel, black-thorn, or birches. As it approached the village the scenery about it became more soft and tranquil. The banks spread away into meadows flower-spangled and green; the fields became richer; the corn waved to the soft breezes of summer; the noon-day smoke of the dinner fires rose up, and was gently borne away to the more wide-spread scene of grandeur and cultivation that lay in the champaign country below it. On each side of the glen were masses of rock and precipices, just large enough to give sufficient wildness and picturesque beauty to a view which in itself was calm and serene. In the distance about a mile to the north, stood out a bold but storm-vexed headland, that heaved back the mighty swell of the Atlantic, of which a glimpse could be caught from an eminence above the village. Nothing indeed could be finer than the booming fury of the giant billows, as they shivered themselves into spray, and thundered around the gloomy caverns of the headland, especially when contrasted with the calm sense of peace and security which reposed upon the neat white village in the glen.

How sweet of a summer Sabbath morning to sit upon the brow of this delightful valley, and contemplate in the light dreams of a happy heart its humble images of all that is pure, and peaceful, and soothing in life; the little bustle of preparation for the cheerful but solemn duties of the day; the glad voices of bright-faced boys and girls, eager to get on their Sunday clothes; the busy stirring about of each tucked-up matron, washing, and combing, and pinning her joyous little ones; and the contented father now dressed, placidly smoking his after-breakfast pipe, looking upon their little cares, and their struggles for precedence in being decked out with their humble finery; now rebuking an elder boy for his impatience and want of consideration in not allowing his juniors to get first dressed, and again soothing a younger one until his turn came.

Page 3

“Barney, troth you ought to have more sinse, avick, than to be quarrellin’ wid poor Jemmy about gettin’ an you. Don’t you know he’s but a child, an’ must of coorse get his little things an before you, espishially as this is the first Sunday of the crathur’s new jacket an’ throwers. Blood alive, Barney, be manly, and don’t make comparishment wid a *pasitah* (child). I hope you’ve got off your lesson in the catechiz this mornin’, and that you wont have to hang down your head wid the blush of shame among the *bouchaleens* (little boys) in the chapel to-day. Go ‘way, avick, and rehearse it, an’ whin your mother finishes him, and Dick, and little Mary, she’ll have yourself as clane as a new sixpence.”

Then came the moment when the neat and well-dressed groups issued out of their happy homes, and sought in cheerful companionship with those of different creeds, their respective places of worship; for, gentle reader, the inhabitants of Ballydhas were, in point of religion, some Protestant, some Roman Catholic, and others Presbyterian. Many a time have we seen them proceed together in peace and friendship along the same road, until they separated either to church, to meeting, or to chapel; and again return on their way home, in a spirit equally cordial and kind. The demon of political discord and religious rancor had not come among them. Each class in the parish worshipped God after its own manner. All were happy, and industrious, and independent, for they had not then been taught that they were slaves and natural enemies groaning under the penal yoke of oppression.

Their fairs and markets were equally peaceful. Neither faction-fight nor party-fight ever stained the streets with blood. The whoop of strife was never raised by neighbor against neighbor, nor the coat trailed, or the caubeen thrown up into the air to challenge an opposite faction. There was, in truth, none of all this. The people were moral and educated. Religion they attended with that decorous sense of decency which always results from a sincere perception of its obligations and influence.

Yet were they not without their sports and rustic amusements. Where the bitterness of malignity is absent, cheerfulness has full play, and candor, ever open and benevolent, is the exponent of mirth and good will. Though their fairs and markets were undisturbed by the savage violence of mutual conflict, yet were they enlivened by the harmless pastimes which throw the charm of uncorrupted life over the human heart and the innocent scenes from which it draws in its amusements. Life is harsh enough, and we are no friends to those who would freeze its genial current by the gloomy chill of ascetic severity.

Page 4

Within about two miles of Ballydhas stood the market town of the parish. It also bore the traces of peace and happiness. Around it lay a rich fertile country, studded with warm homesteads, waving fields, and residences of a higher rank, at once elegant and fashionable. The gentry were not, it is true, of the highest class; but in lieu of that they were kind, considerate, and what was before all, resident. If an accidental complaint happened to be preferred by one man against another, they generally were qualified by a knowledge of their characters to administer justice between them, without the risk of being misled by misrepresentation. This prevented many complaints founded in malice or party-spirit, and consequently reduced litigation to an examination of the very few cases in which actual injury had been sustained.

Many a fair day have we witnessed in this quiet and thriving market town. And it is sweet to us—yes, intensely sweet to leave, for a moment, the hollow and slippery pathways of artificial life—of that unfeeling, unholy and loathsome selfishness of heart, and soul, and countenance, which marks as with a brand of infamy, the fictions of fashionable and metropolitan society, where every person and profession you meet, is a lie or a libel to be guarded against. Yes, it is pleasant to us to leave all this, and to go back in imagination to a fair day in the town of Balaghmore. Like an annual festival, it stole upon us with many yearning wish, that time, at least for a month before, should be annihilated. And when the fair morning came, what a drifting tide of people, cows, sheep, horses, and pigs, passed on in the eager tumult of business, before our eyes. The comfortable farmer in his best gray frize; the young man in spruce corduroy breeches, home-made blue coat, and bran new hat; the tidy maiden with neat bunch of yarn, spun by her own fingers, giving sufficient proof to her bachelor that a young woman of industrious habits uniformly makes the best wife for a poor man. Various, indeed, were the classes that, in multitudinous groups, drifted towards the fair green. The spruce, well-mounted horse-jockey, with bottle-green coat closely buttoned, tight buckskin inexpressibles, long-lashed hunting-whip, and top-boots; the drover on his plump hack, pacing slowly after his fat beeves; the gentleman farmer, trundling along in his gig, or trotting smartly on a bit of half-blood. Here go a family group, the children with new hats and ruffles, grandfather a little behind, with the hand of an own pet boy or a girl in his; observe the joy of their faces; what complacent happiness on the ruddy countenance of the healthy old man. The parents are also happy, but betray the unconscious anxiety of those who love their children, and are sensible of the serious duties inseparable from their condition; the four little ones know not the cares of affection, and, consequently, their looks are full of delight, eagerness, and curiosity.

Page 5

What a tide of bewildered interrogatories does the fifth urchin pour upon the ear of the old grandfather, who is foolish enough to stop the whole group, in order to relate the precocious pertinency of some particular query. There goes a snug farmer, his wife, and good-looking daughters, seated upon a farm-car that is trussed with straw, covered by a blue quilt. We will wager that some “good woman” has somewhere about the premises a few cakes of hard griddle-wheat, to eat when they get hungry, with a glass of punch, and, it may be, a good slice or two of excellent hung beef or bacon. But now they approach town, and the stream thickens. There go the beggars, mendicants, and impostors, showing a degree of agility rather impracticable with their respective maladies, grievous and deplorable as they all, of course, are; and toiling vehemently after them, hops “Bill i’ the Bowl,” pitching himself along in a copper-fastened dish, with a small stool or *creepie* supporting each hand. But now the whole sweep of the town and fair-green open to us; tents, and standings, and tables, and roasting and boiling are all about us; for the *spoileen* fires are in operation, and many a fat sheep will be cut up, as well for those who have never tasted mutton before, as for hundreds who eat rather from hunger than curiosity. Heavens! what an astounding multitude of discordant noises all blend into one hoarse, deep, drowsy body of sound, for which we can find no suitable term. Cows lowing, sheep bleating, pigs grunting, horses neighing, men shouting, women screaming, fiddlers playing, pipes squeeling, youngsters, dancing, hammering up of standings and tents, thumping of restive or lazy animals, the show-man’s drum, the lottery-man’s speech, the ballad-singer’s squall, all come upon us; and lastly, the unheeded sweep of the death-bell, as it tells with sullen tongues that some poor mortal has for ever departed from the cares and amusements, the trade and traffic, of this transitory life.

About twelve o’clock the fair-tide is full; for that is the time in which the greatest interchange of property, and the most vigorous transactions of business, with all accompanying bustle and activity, take place. For an hour or two this continues. About three o’clock the tide is evidently on the ebb; business begins to slacken, and those who have their transactions brought to a close, meet their families and friends at the place of rendezvous—always a public house. It is now, indeed, when the heat and burden of the day have passed, and refreshment becomes both grateful and necessary, that the people fall into distinct groups for the purpose of social enjoyment. If two young folk have been for some time “*coortin*” one another, “the bachelor,” which in Ireland means a suitor, generally contrives to bring his friends and those of, his sweetheart together. The very fact of their accepting the “*thrates*,” on either side, or both, is a good omen, and considered tantamount

Page 6

to a mutual consent of their respective connections. This, however, is not always so; for it often happens that a match is broken off after many a friendly computation has been held “upon the head of it,” which means upon that subject. Let the reader stand with us for a few minutes, and we will point out to him one or two groups who have met for the purpose of settling a marriage. Do you see that tall *sthree!* of a fellow, who slings awkwardly along, for which reason he is nicknamed by his acquaintances “a sling-poke”? Observe the lazy grotesque repose of his three-featured face, for more it does not present, *viz.*—mouth, eyes, and nose. His long legs are without calves, and he is in-kneed; yet the fellow has such taste, that in order to show his shape he must needs wear breeches! Look at his coat, which was made for him about five years ago, when he was but “a slip of a boy.” The thin collar only reaches to the upper part of his shoulder; and as he is what is called “crane-necked,” of course the distance between his hat and the collar is incredible. The arms of the said coat are set so far in, that they appear almost to meet behind; but, on the other hand, two naked bones, each about six inches in length, project from the cuffs, which come not far below his elbows. The coat itself is what is called a jerkin; and as the buttons behind are half-way up his back, it is a matter of course that the tail, which runs rapidly to a point, is ludicrously scanty. Now, that youth, who is probably under no sense of gratitude to the graces, has put his “comedher” on the prettiest girl, with one or two exceptions, in the whole parish. The miserable pitch-fork, the longitudinal rake—we speak now in a hay-making sense—has contrived to oust half a dozen of the handsomest and best-looking fellows in the parish. How he has done this is a mystery to his acquaintances; but it is none to us—we know him. The kraken has a tongue dripping with honey—one that would smooth a newly-picked millstone. There they go, each of them laughing and cheerful, except himself; yet the fellow, though conscious of his own influence, enters the public-house as if he were going on the forlorn hope, or trailing his straggling limbs to confide his last wishes to the ear of the sheriff or hangman. He is, however, an Irishman at heart, though little indeed of the national bearing is visible in his deportment.

Here again comes a second group. Keep your eye on that good-humored, ruddy-faced young man, compact and vigorous, who is evidently the wag of his party. Observe his tight-titling, comfortable frize, neat brogues, and breeches, on the knees of which are two double knots of silk ribbon. See with what a smart, decisive air he wears his hat—“jauntily,” as Leigh Hunt would say—upon one side of his head. That fellow has a high character for gallantry, and is allowed to be “the very sorrow among the girls”—“a Brinoge,” “wid an eye that ’ud steal cold praties

Page 7

off a dresser.” He is now leading in a girl, handsome no doubt, but who, nevertheless, does not possess sixpence, or sixpence worth for her portion. Not so the sword-fish we have pointed out to you a while ago, the tail of whose short coat lay as closely to him as that of a crab. The cassoway has secured a girl who, in point of wealth and dower, will be the making of him. However, you know the secret, Solomon says that a soft answer turneth away wrath; but what will not a soft question do, when put to a pretty girl, where there is no wrath?

Here comes another party, fewer in point of number than those we have shown you; a young man, a middle-aged woman, and her two daughters—one grown, the other only about fifteen. Who is—ah!—it is not necessary to inquire. Alley Bawn Murray! Gentle reader bow with heartfelt respect to humble beauty and virtue! She is that widow’s daughter, the pride of the parish, and the beloved of all who can appreciate goodness, affection, and filial piety. The child accompanying them is her sister, and that fine, manly, well-built, handsome youth is even now pledged to the modest and beautiful girl. He is the son of a wealthy farmer, some time dead; but in purity, in truth, and an humble sense of religion, their hearts are each rich and each equal.

Alas! alas! that it should be so! but we cannot control the inscrutable designs of Heaven. The spirit of our narrative must change, and our tale can henceforth breathe nothing but what is as mournful as it is true. There they pass into that public-house, true-hearted and attached; unconscious, too, poor things, of the almost present calamity that is soon to wither that noble boy and his beautiful betrothed. Their history, up to the period of their entering the public-house, is very brief and simple. Felix O’Donnell was the son of a farmer, as we have said, sufficiently extensive and industrious to be wealthy, without possessing any of the vulgar pride which rude independence frequently engrafts upon the ignorant and narrow-hearted. His family consisted of two sons and a daughter—Maura, the last-named, being the eldest, and Felix by several years the junior of his brother Hugh. Between the two brothers there was in many things a marked contrast of character, whilst in others there might be said to exist a striking similarity. Hugh was a dark-brown, fiery man when opposed, though in general quiet and inoffensive. His passions blazed out with fury for a moment, and only for a moment; for no sooner had he been borne by their vehemence into the commission of an error, than he became quickly alive to the promptings of a heart naturally affectionate and kind. In money transactions he had the character of being a hard man; yet were there many in the parish who could declare that they found him liberal and considerate. The truth was, that he estimated money at more than its just value, without absolutely giving up his heart to its influence. When a

Page 8

young man, though in good circumstances, he looked cautiously about him, less for the best or the handsomest wife than the largest dowry. In the speculation, so far as it was pecuniary, he succeeded; but his domestic peace was overshadowed by the gloom of his own character, and not unfrequently disturbed by the violent temper of a wife who united herself to him with an indifferent heart. He was, in short, a man more respected than loved; one of whom it was often said, "Well, well, he's a decent man, neighbours—a little hard or so about money, but for all that there's worse. Sure we all have our failin's. There's one thing in him any how, that if he offends a man he's sorry for it: ay, an' when he does chance to do a good turn, sorra a word ever any one hears about it from his own lips. To be sure there's a great deal of the nager in him no doubt, an' in troth he didn't take after his own father for that. Devil a dacent man than ould Felix O'Donnell ever broke bread."

His brother Felix, in all that was amiable and affectionate, strongly resembled him; but there the resemblance terminated. Felix was subject to none of his gloomy moods or violent outbursts of temper. He was manly, liberal, and cheerful—valued money at its proper estimate, and frequently declared, that in the choice of a wife he would never sacrifice his happiness to acquire it.

"I have enough of my own," he would say; "and when I meet the woman that my heart chooses, whether she has fortune or not, that's the girl that I will bring to share it, if she can love me."

Felix and his sister both, resided together; for after his father's death he succeeded to the inheritance that had been designed for him. Maura O'Donnell was in that state of life in which we feel it extremely difficult to determine whether a female is hopeless or not upon the subject of marriage. Her humors had begun to ferment and to clear off into that thin vinegar serum which engenders the exquisite perception of human error, and the equally keen touch with which it is reproofed. Time, in fact, had begun to crimp her face, and the vinegar to sparkle in her eye with that fiery gleam which is so easily lit up at five and thirty. Still she loved Felix, whose good-humor constituted him a butt for the irascible sallies of a temper more nearly allied to his brother Hugh's than his own. He was her younger brother, too, of whom she was justly proud; and she knew that Felix, in spite of the pungency of her frequent reproofs, loved her deeply, as was evident by the many instances of his considerate attention in bringing her home presents of dress, and in contributing, as far as lay in his power, to her comfort.

Page 9

The world, indeed, is too much in the habit of drawing distorted inferences from the transient feuds that occasionally appear in domestic life. It would be hard to find a family in which they do not sometimes occur; and when noticed by strangers, it is both uncharitable and unjust to conclude that there is an absence of domestic affection in the hearts of those who, after all, prove no more than that they are subject to the errors and passions of human nature, like their fellow creatures. No sister, for instance, ever loved another with stronger affection than poor Maura did her brother Felix, notwithstanding the repeated scoldings which, for very trivial causes, he experienced at her tongue. Woe, keen and scathing, be to those who dared, in her presence to utter an insinuation against him.

“If she abused him, she only did it for his good, and because she loved him; an’ good right she had to love him, for a better brother never breathed the breath of life. Wasn’t he a mere boy, only one-and-twenty years come next Lammas; and surely it stood to reason that he wanted sometimes to be checked and scolded too. He had neither father or mother to guide him, poor boy; and who would guide him, and advise him too, if his own sister wouldn’t do it? Only one-and-twenty, and six feet in his shoes; but no *punhial*, no cabbage upon two pot-sticks, like some she knew, that were ready enough to give boy a harsh word when they ought to look nearer home, and—may-be—but she said nothing—as God forbid that she’d make or meddle with any neighbor’s character; but still, may-be, they’d find enough to blame at home, if they’d open their eyes to their own failings, as well as they do to the failings of their neighbors.”

Another circumstance also strongly characteristic of the woman’s heart, was evinced in the high and vigorous tone she assumed towards Hugh, whenever, in any of his dark moods, he happened to take Felix to task. These fierce encounters, however, never occurred in Felix’s presence; for she thought that to take his part then, would remove, in a great degree, the ‘vantage ground on which she stood with reference to himself. Difficult, indeed, was the part she found herself compelled to play on those delicate occasions. She could not, as a moralist and disciplinarian, proverbially strict, seem in any degree to countenance the charges brought by Hugh against Felix; nor, on the other hand, was it without a command of temper and heroic self-denial, rarely attained, that she was able to keep, her indignation against Hugh pent up within decorous and plausible limits. During the remonstrance of the latter, she usually pushed the charges against Felix into the notorious failings of Hugh himself, and this she did in a tone of irony so dry and cutting, that Hugh was almost in every case, as willing to abandon the attack as he had been to begin it.

Page 10

“Ay, indeed,” she would proceed—“troth an’ conscience, Hugh, avourneen”—avourneen being pronounced with a civil bitterness that was perfectly withering—“troth an’ conscience, Hugh, avourneen, it’s truth you’re speaking, and not only that, Hugh darling, but he’s as dark as the old *dioul* betimes, so he is, and runs into such fits of blackness and anger, for no reason—Hugh, *dheelish*, for no reason in life, man alive. Are, you listening, Hugh? for it’s to you I’m speaking, dear—for no reason in life, acushla, only because he’s a dirty, black bodagh, that his whole soul and body’s not worth the scrapings of a pot in a hard summer. Did you hear me, Hugh jewel? Felix, go out, avourneen, ye onbiddable creature, and look after them ditchers, and see that they don’t play upon us to-day, as they did on Saturday.”

Felix, who understood the sister’s irony, went out on every such, occasion with perfect good will, and indulged in an uncontrollable fit of laughter at her masked attack upon his brother.

No sooner was he gone than Hugh either fled at once, or gathered himself up against the vehement assault he knew she was about to make upon him.

“Why then, Hugh O’Donnell, ar’n’t you a dirty, black bodagh, to go to open upon the poor boy for no reason in life? What did he do that you should abuse him, you nager you? and it’s well known that you’re a nager, and that your heart’s in the shillin’. Oh! it’s long before you’d go to fair or market and bring home the best gown, or shawl, or mantle in it to the only sister you have, as he does. Ay, ar’n’t you the cream of a dirty, black bodagh, for to go to attack the poor boy only for speaking to a dacent and a purty girl that hasn’t a stain upon her name, or upon the name of one of her seed, breed, or generation, you miserly nager. I wouldn’t say that before him, because I want to keep him under me; but where, I say, could you get so fine a young slip as poor Felix is? My soul to the dev—God pardon me! I was going to say what I oughtn’t to say: but I tell you, Hugh, that you must quit of it; he’s the only brother we have, and it’s the least we should be kind to him.”

During this harangue poor Hugh’s flush of passion usually departed from him. As we said, he loved his only brother; and so vivid were Maura’s representations of his virtues, that Hugh, his passion having subsided, was usually borne away by the pathos with which she closed her observations respecting him. A burst of tears always concluded the dialogue on her part, and deep regret on the part of Hugh; for, in fact, the charges against Felix were such only as none except they themselves in the very exuberance of their affection, would think of bringing against him.

The reader is already acquainted with the allusion made by Maura to the “dacent and purty girl that hasn’t a stain upon her name, or upon the name of one of her seed, breed, or generation.” This “purty” girl is no other than Alley Bawn Murray; and although Maura, from a sheer spirit of contradiction, spoke of her to Hugh in a favorable point of

view, yet nothing could be more obstinately bitter than her opposition to such a match on the part of Felix.

Page 11

This, however, is human nature. To those who cannot understand such a character, we offer no apology—to the few who do, none is necessary.

The courtship of Alley Bawn and Felix had arrived, on the fair-day of Ballaghmore, to a crisis which required decision on the part of the wooer. They went in, as we have shown the reader, to a public-house. Their conversation, which was only such as takes place in a thousand similar instances, we do not mean to detail. It was tender and firm on the part of Felix, and affectionate between him and her. With that high pride, which is only another name for humility, she urged him to forget her, “if it was not plasin’ to his frinds. You know, Felix,” she continued, “that I am poor and you are rich, an’ I wouldn’t wish to be dragged into a family that couldn’t respect me.”

“Alley dear,” replied Felix, “I know that both Hugh and Maura love me in their hearts; and although they make a show of anger in the beginnin’, yet they’ll soon soften, and will love you as they do me.”

“Well, Felix,” replied Alley, “my mother and you are present; if my mother says I ought _____”

“I do, darling,” said her mother; “that is, I can’t feel any particular objection to it. Yet somehow my mind is troubled. I know that what he says is what will happen; but, for all that—och, Felix, aroon, there’s something over me about the same match—I don’t know—I’m willin’ an’ I’m not willin’.”

They arose to depart; and as both families lived in the beautiful village of Ballydhas, which we have already described to the reader, of course their walk home was such as lovers could wish.

Evening had arrived; the placid summer sun shone down with a mild flood of light upon Ballaghmore and the surrounding country. There was nothing in the evening whose external phenomena could depress any human heart. The ocean lay like a mirror, on which the beams of the sun glistened in magnificent shafts, in whatsoever position you looked upon it. Not a wave or a ripple broke the expansive sheet, that stretched away till it melted into the dipping sky; yet to the ear its mysterious and deep murmurs were audible, and the lonely eternal sobbing of the awful sea, struck upon the heart of the superstitious mother with a sense of fear and calamity. Felix and Alley went before them, and the conversation which we are about to detail, took place between herself and her youngest daughter.

“Susy, darlin’,” said she, “you see the happy pair before us; but why is it, acushla, that my heart is sunk when I think of their marriage? Do you hear that say? There’s not a wave on it, but still it’s angry, if one can judge by its voice. Darlin’ it’s a bad sign, for the same say isn’t always so. Sometimes it is as asy as a sleepin’ baby, and sometimes, although its waves are quiet enough, it looks like a murderer asleep. Now it breathes

heavily avourneen, as if all was not right. Susy, darlin', I'm afeard, I say, that it's a bad sign."

Page 12

"Mother dear," replied Susy, "what makes you speak that way? Sure it wouldn't be the little-sup o' punch that Felix made you take that 'ud get into your head!"

"No, darlin'! Look at the pair before us; there they go, the pride, both o' them, God knows, of the whole parish; but still when I think of the bitterness of Felix's friends, Susy, I can't help being afeard. His brother Hugh is a dark man, and his sister Maura is against it. God pity them! It's a cruel world, acushla, when people like them can't do as they'd wish to do. But, Susy, you're a child, and knows nothing at all about it."

Felix and Alley walked on, unconscious of the ominous forebodings which the superstition of the affectionate woman prompted her to utter. The arrangements for their marriage were on that night concluded, and the mother, after some feebly expressed misgivings, at which Felix and Alley laughed heartily, was induced, to consent that on the third Sunday following they should be joined in wedlock. Had Felix been disposed to conceal his marriage from Hugh and Maura, at least until the eve of its occurrence, the publishing of their banns in the chapel would have, of course, disclosed it. When his sister heard that the arrangements were completed, she poured forth a torrent of abuse against what she considered the folly and simplicity of a mere boy, who allowed himself to be caught in the snares of an artful girl, with nothing but a handsome face to recommend her. Felix received all this with good humor, and replied only in a strain of jocularly to every thing she said.

Hugh, on the other hand, contented himself with a single observation. "Felix," said he, "I won't see you throw yourself away upon a girl that is no fit match for you. If you can't take care of yourself, I will. Once for all, I tell you that this marriage must not take place."

As he uttered these words his dark brows were bent, and his eyes flashed with a gleam of that ungovernable passion for which he was so remarkable. Felix, at all times peaceable, and always willing to acknowledge his elder brother's natural right to exercise a due degree of authority over him, felt that this was stretching it too far. Still he made no reply, nor indeed did Hugh allow him time to retort, had he been so disposed. They separated without more words, each resolved to accomplish his avowed purpose.

The opposition of Hugh and Maura to his marriage, only strengthened Felix's resolution to make his beloved and misrepresented Alley Bawn, the rightful mistress of his hearth, as she already was of his affections. Nay, his love burned for her with a purer and tenderer flame, when he looked upon the artless girl, and thought of the cruel hearts that would make her a martyr to a spirit so worldly-minded and selfish. Their deep-rooted prejudice against her poverty, he delicately concealed from her, together with the length to which their opposition had gone. As for himself, he acted precisely as if the approaching marriage had their full sanction; he saw Alley every day, became still more

deeply enamored, and heard his sister's indignant remonstrances without uttering a single syllable in reply.

Page 13

At length the happy Sunday morning arrived, and never did a more glorious sun light up the beautiful valley of Ballydhas than that which shed down its smiling radiance from heaven upon their union. Felix's heart was full of that eager and trembling delight, which, where there is pure and disinterested love, always marks our emotions upon that blessed epoch in human life. Maura, contrary to her wont, was unusually silent during the whole morning; but Felix could perceive that she watched all his emotions with the eye of a lynx. When the hour of going to chapel approached, he deemed it time to dress, and, for that purpose, went to a large oaken tallboy that stood in the kitchen, in order to get out his clothes. It was locked, however, and his sister told him at once, that the key, which was in her possession, should not pass into his hands that day. "No," she continued, "nor sorra the ring you'll put on the same girl with my consent. Aren't you a purty young omadhaun, you spiritless creature, to go to marry sich a *niddy-nauddhy*, when you know that the best fortunes in the glen would jump at you! Yes, faiks! to bring home that mane, useless creature, that hasn't a penny to the good! A purty farmer's wife she'll make, and purtily she'll fill my poor mother's shoes, God be good to her! A poor, unsignified, smooth-faced thing, that never did a dacent day's work out of doors, barring to shake up a cock of hay, or pull the growing of a peck of flax! Oh! thin, mother darlin', that's in glory this day! but it's a purty head of a house he's puttin' afther you; and myself, too, must knock under to the like of her, and see her put up in authority over my head. Let me alone, Felix; your laughing wont pass. The sorra kay you'll get from me to-day."

Felix, who was resolved to procure the key, saw that there was nothing for it but a little friendly violence. A good-humored struggle accordingly commenced between them—good-humored on his side, but bitter and determined on the part of Maura. Finding it difficult to secure the key, even by violence, Felix was about to give up the contest, and force the lock at once, when Hugh entered.

"What's all this?" he inquired. "What racket's this? Is it beating your sister you are? Is the young headstrong profligate beating you, Maura, eh?"

"No, Hugh, not that; but he wants the kay to deck himself up for marrying that pot of his. God knows, I'd rather he did beat me than do what he's going to do."

"Felix," said his brother, "I'm over you in place of your father, and I tell you that it'll cost me a sore fall, or I'll put a stop to this day's work. A purty bridegroom you are, and a 'sponsible father of a family you'll make! By my sowl, it's a horsewhip I ought to take to you, and lash all thoughts of marriage out of you. What a hurry you are in to go a shoolin' (to become the rustic *chevalier d'industrie*). You had bettther provide yourself the bag and staff at once, for if you marry this portionless, good-for-nothing hussy——"

Page 14

Felix's eye flashed, and, for the first time in his life, he turned a fierce glance upon his brother.

"She's no hussy, Hugh; and if another man said it——" he paused, for it was but the 'hectic of a moment.'

"You'd knock him down, I suppose," said Hugh. "Why don't you speak it out? Why, Maura, he's a man on our hands, and I suppose he'll be a bully to-morrow, or next day, and put us all under his feet, and make us all knuckle down to his poppet of a wife."

"Hugh," said Felix, "I am willin to forget and forgive all the harshness ever you showed me, and to remimber nothing but your kindness, and you wor kind, to me; you're my brother—my only, and my eldest brother, and I beg it as a favor to one that loves you both, that you'll not interfere in my marriage this day."

"So far only," replied Hugh, "that I'll stop it for good an' all. You'll get no clothes out of this press to-day. In ten years or so you may be thinkin' of it. There's Madge M'Gawley, take her, with all my heart; a girl that has fifty pounds, five cows, and threescore sheep: ay, an' a staid sober girl. To be sure she's no beauty, an' not fit for 'gintlemen' that must have purty faces, and empty pockets. I say again, Felix, I'll put an end to this match."

This was too much for Felix's patience. After several unsuccessful remonstrances, and even supplications very humbly expressed, a fierce struggle ensued between the brothers which was only terminated by the interference of the two servant-men, who with some difficulty forced the elder out of the house, and brought him across the fields towards his own home. Maura then gave up the key, and the youthful bridegroom was soon dressed and prepared to meet his "man," and a few friends whom he had invited, at the chapel. His mind, however, was disturbed, and his heart sank at this ill-omened commencement of his wedding day.

"Maura," said he, when about to leave the house, "I'm heavy at heart for what has happened. Will you say that you forgive me, dear, before I go? and tell Hugh that I forgive him everything, and that the last words I said before I went, wor—'that the blessin' of God may rest upon him and his,' and upon you too, Maura, dear."

These expressions are customary among Irish families when a marriage is about to take place; but upon this occasion they came spontaneously from a generous and feeling heart. Felix saw with sorrow that his brother and sister had not blessed him, and he resolved that his part of a duty so tender should not remain unperformed.

Maura, who suddenly averted her face when he addressed her, made no reply; but after he had departed from the threshold, her eyes followed him, and the tears slowly forced their way down her cheeks.



"It's no use," said she, "it's no use, I love him, I love my kind brother in spite of every thing. May God bless you Felix! may God bless you, and all you love! God forgive me for opposin' the boy as I did; and God forgive Hugh! but he thinks it would be all for Felix's good to stop his marriage with Alley Bawn."

Page 15

Felix, who heard neither his sister's blessing nor the expression of the affection she bore him, passed on with hasty steps through the fields. He had not gone far, however, when he saw his brother walking towards him; his arms folded, and his eyes almost hidden by his heavy brows; sullen ferocity was in his looks, and his voice, as he addressed him, was hollow with suppressed rage.

"So," said he, "you will ruin yourself! Go back home, Felix."

"For God's sake, Hugh, let me alone, let me pass."

"You will go?" said the other.

"I will, Hugh."

"Then may bad luck go with you, if you do. I order you to stay at home, I say."

"Mind your own business, Hugh, and I'll mind mine," was the only reply given him.

Felix walked on by making a small circuit out of the direct path, for he was anxious not only to proceed quickly, as his time was limited, but above all things, to avoid a collision with his brother.

[Illustration: PAGE 75— Felix fell forward in an instant]

The characteristic fury of the latter shot out in a burst that resembled momentary madness as much as rage. "Is that my answer?" he shouted, in the hoarse, quivering accents of passion; and with the rapid energy of the dark impulse which guided him, he snatched up a stone from a ditch, and flung it at his brother, whose back was towards him. Felix fell forward in an instant, but betrayed after his fall no symptoms of motion—the stillness of apparent death was in every limb. Hugh, after the blow had been given, stood rooted to the earth, and looked as if the demon which possessed him had fled the moment the fearful act had been committed. His now bloodless lips quivered, his frame became relaxed, and the wild tremor of horrible apprehension shook him from limb to limb. Immediately a fearful cry was heard far over the field's, and the words—"Oh! yeah! yeah, yeah, Felix, my brother, agra, can't you spake to me?" struck upon the heart of Maura and the servant-men, with a feeling of dismay, deep and deadly.

"O God!" she exclaimed, with clasped hands and upturned eyes, "O God! my boy, my boy—Felix, Felix, what has happened to you?"

Again the agonized cry of the brother was heard loud and frantic.

"Oh, yeah, yeah, Felix, are you dead? brother, agra, can't you speak to me?"



With rapid steps they rushed to the spot; but, ah! what a scene was there to blast their sight and sear the brain of his sister, and indeed of all who could look upon it. The young bridegroom smote down when his foot was on the very threshold of happiness, and by the hand of a brother?

Hugh, in the mean time, had turned up Felix from the prone posture in which he lay, with a hope—a frenzied, a desperate hope of ascertaining whether or not life was extinct. In this position the stricken boy was lying, his brother, like a maniac, standing over him, when Maura and the servants arrived. One glance, a shudder, then a long ghastly gaze at Hugh, and she sank down beside the insensible victim of his fury.

Page 16

"What," said Hugh, wildly clenching his hands, "Mother of glory, have I killed both? Oh, Felix, Felix! you are happy, you are happy, agra, brother; but for me, oh, for me, my hour of mercy is past an' gone. I can never look to heaven more! How can I live," he muttered furiously to himself, "how can I live? and I daren't die. O God! O God! my brain's turnin'. I needn't pray to God to curse the hand that struck you dead, Felix dear, for I feel this minute that His curse is on me."

Felix was borne in, but no arm would Hugh suffer to encircle him but his own. Poor Maura recovered and although in a state of absolute distraction, yet she had presence of mind to remember that they ought to use every means in their power to restore the boy to life if it were possible. Water was got, with which his face was sprinkled; in a little time he breathed, opened his eyes, looked mournfully about him, and asked what had happened him. Never was pardon to the malefactor, nor the firm tread of land to the shipwrecked mariner, so welcome as the dawn of returning life in Felix was to his brother. The moment he saw the poor youth's eyes fixed upon him, and heard his voice, he threw himself on his knees at the bedside, clasped him in his arms, and with an impetuous tide of sensations, in which were blended joy, grief, burning affection, and remorse, he kissed his lips, strained him to his bosom, and wept with such agony, that poor Felix was compelled to console him.

"Oh! Felix, Felix," exclaimed Hugh "what was it I did to you? or how could the devil out of hell tempt me to—to—to—oh! Felix agra, say you're not hurted—say only that you'll be as well as ever, an I take God and every one present to witness, that from this minute till the day of my death, a harsh word 'll never crass my lips to you. Say you're not hurted, Felix dear! Don't you know, Felix, in spite of my dark-temper's putting me into a passion with you sometimes, that I always loved you?"

"Yes you did, Hugh," replied Felix, "an' I still knew you did. I didn't often contradict you, because I knew, too, that the passion would soon go off of you, and that you'd be kind to me again."

"Yeah, yeelish," said the other, while the scalding tears flowed profusely down his cheeks, and the deep sobs almost choked him. "Oh, yeah, yeelish! what could come over me! As judgment's before me, he was the best brother ever God created—you were, Felix darling—you were, you were!" He again pressed him to his heart, and kissed his lips with an overwhelming fulness of remorse and love.

"An' another thing, Felix dear—but first tell me are you gettin' bettther?"

"I am," replied the youth, "my head is a little confused, but I have no pain."

Hugh raised his hands and streaming eyes to heaven.

Page 17

"Thanks, thanks, oh thanks an' praise be to God for that news! thanks an' praise be to you, blessed Father, for what he has said this minute, for it takes the weight, the dead crushin' weight that lay on my heart, off it. And now, Felix jewel, here, alanna, lay over your head upon my breast, an' I'll hould you anything I whisper into your own ear what 'll make you as stout as ever—keep away all of yees—the nerra one o' ye 'll hear it but himself. Sure, Felix dear," he continued, in a lower voice, "sure I'm willin' that you should marry your own Alley Bawn. An' listen, sure, I'll give her a portion myself—I'm able to do it an' I will too."

Felix, on hearing her name, looked around and endeavored, as appeared by his manner, to collect himself. He put his hand to his head for a moment and his eyes were without meaning. Hugh observed it, and felt his grief instantly checked by a fearful surmise as to a possible consequence of the blow which he had not contemplated.

"Felix dear," said he in a voice low, hollow, and full of terror, "what ails you? Is the pain coming back?"

Felix spoke not for about a minute, during which time he had become quite collected. Then with an affectionate look towards his brother, he replied—

"God bless you, Hugh, for the words you have said to me! Poor Alley? Hugh, God bless you! Would Maura consent? Will you consent, agra, to it, Maura dear?"

Maura, who had been all this time weeping, now advanced, and, smiling through her tears, embraced him tenderly. "Yes, Felix, darling, an' I'm only heart-broken, that ever Hugh or myself refused to consent, or ever set ourselves against it."

The boy's eyes sparkled with a light more brilliant than had ever shone from them before: his whole face became animated, and the cloud of sorrow which had rested on his pale brow melted away before the effulgence of reviving hope. In a few minutes he arose and expressed his determination to proceed and keep his appointment. Hugh and Maura requested to accompany him, and the latter begged to be allowed the privilege to give the bride away.

"Maura," said Felix, "will you desire the servants to have a decent dinner prepared, and we'll eat it here. I intend, if you and Hugh will let me, to bring her home at once!"

"Och, God help the poor boy!" exclaimed Maura—"yes, darling, all that must be done."

When ready to depart, he again put his hand to his head—"It comes on here," said he, "for about a minute or so—this confusion—I think I'll tie a handkerchief about my head. It 'ill be an asy thing for me to make some excuse, or I can take it off at the chapel."

Page 18

This was immediately acquiesced in; but at Hugh's suggestion a car was prepared, a horse yoked in a few minutes, and Felix, accompanied and supported by his brother and sister, set out for Mass. On arriving at the "green," he felt that his short journey had not been beneficial to him; on the contrary, he was worse, and very properly declined to go into the heated atmosphere of the chapel. A message by his sister soon brought the blushing, trembling, serious, yet happy-looking girl to his side. Her neat white dress, put on with that natural taste which is generally accompanied by as clear sense of moral propriety, and her plain cottage bonnet, bought for the occasion, showed that she came prepared, not beyond, but to the utmost reach of her humble means. And this she did more for Felix's sake than her own, for she resolved that her appearance should not, if possible, jar upon the feelings of one who, she knew, in marrying her, had sacrificed prospects of wealth and worldly happiness for her sake. At sight of her, Felix smiled, but it was observed that his face, which had a moment before been pale, was instantly flushed, and his eye unusually bright. When he had kissed her, she replied to the friendly greetings of his brother and Maura with the most comely dignity, well suited to her situation and circumstances. Then turning to the elected husband of her heart, she said—

"Why thin, Felix, but it's little credit you do me this happy morning, coming with your night-cap on, as if you weren't well;" but as she saw the smile fade from his lips, and the color from his cheek, her heart sank, and "pallid as death's dedicated bride," with her soft blue eyes bent upon his changing color and bandaged head, she exclaimed, "God be merciful to us! Felix dear, you are ill—you are hurt! Felix, Felix darling, what ails you? What is wrong?"

"Don't be frightened, jewel," he replied, "Don't, darling—it won't signify—my foot slipped after laving you last night on my way home, and my head came against a stone—it's only a little sore outside. It 'ill be very well as soon as the priest puts your heart and mine together—never to be parted—long—long an' airnestly have I wished an' prayed for this happy day. Isn't your mother here, jewel, an' my own little Ellen?"

Her eye had been fixed upon his countenance with all the love and anxiety of a young bride about to be united to the husband of her heart's first choice. She saw that despite of every effort to the contrary, there was in his mind a source of some secret sorrow. A single tear rolled down her cheek, which he kissed away, and as he did it, whispered her in a tone of affectionate confidence, that it was but a trifle and signified nothing. Maura took her hand, and assured her that no cause for apprehension existed; so did Hugh, but as he held her hand in his, he perceived that she got pale again, and trembled as if seized with some sudden fear.

Page 19

When the ceremony was concluded, those who attended it of course returned to Felix's house to partake of the wedding-dinner. He, indeed, seemed to be gifted with new life; his eyes sparkled, and a deep carmine of his cheek was dazzling to look upon. Courtesy, and the usages prevalent on such occasions, compelled him to drink more than his state of health was just then capable of bearing; he did not, however, transgress the bounds of moderation. Still the noise of many tongues, the sounds of laughter, and the din of mirth, joined to the consciousness that his happiness was now complete, affected him with the feverish contagion of the moment. He talked hurriedly and loud, and seemed to feel as if the accomplishment of his cherished hopes was too much for his heart to bear.

In the midst of all this jollity a change which none observed came over him. His laugh became less frequent than his shudder or his sigh, and taking Alley aside, he begged she would walk with him to the beach.

"The say-breeze," said he, "and a sate upon the rocks—upon our thyme-bank, where we've often sat happily, Alley dear, will bring me to myself soon. I am tired, asthore machree, of all this noise and confusion. Come away, darling, we'll be happier with one another than with all these people about us."

His young bride accompanied him, and as they went, her happy heart beating under that arm to whose support she had now a right, her love the while calm and secure in its own deep purity, she saw before them, in bright perspective, many, many years of domestic affection and peace.

There they sat in the mellow sunset, until the soft twilight had gradually melted away the lengthened shadows of the rocks about them. Their hands were locked in each other, their hearts burned within them, and a tenderness which can be felt only by souls equally pure and innocent touched their delighted converse into something that might be deemed beautiful and holy.

Artless, humble, and happy pair! Sit on and enjoy the only brief glimpse of this earth's heaven which you will ever get. It is the last time that heart will beat responsive to heart, and soul tremble to and mingle with soul between you.

Long before the hour of their return, Felix had felt much worse than during any preceding part of the day. The vivid and affectionate hopes of future happiness expressed by Alley added to his concern, and increased his tenderness towards her, especially when he contrasted his own physical sensations with the unsuspecting character of her opinion concerning his illness and the cause that produced it. 'Tis true he disguised all this as long as he could; but at length, notwithstanding his firmness, he was forced to acknowledge that pain overcame him. With the burning chill of fever bubbling through his blood—shivering yet scorching—he complained of the shooting

pain in his head, and a strange confusion of mind, which the poor girl, from some of his incoherent expressions,

Page 20

had attributed to his excess of affection. With words of comfort she soothed him; her arm now returned the support she had received from his; she led him home, languid and half-delirious, whilst she herself felt stunned as well by the violence as by the unaccountable nature of his illness. On reaching home they found that the noise of social enjoyment had risen to the outrage of convivial extravagance; but the moment he staggered in, supported only by the faithful arm of his wife, a solemn and apprehensive spirit suddenly hushed their intemperance, and awed them into a conviction that such an illness upon the marriage day must be as serious as it was uncommon. Felix was put to bed in pain and danger; but Alley smoothed his pillow, bound his head, and sat patient, and devoted, and wife-like, by his side. During all that woeful night of sorrow she watched the feverish start, the wild glare of the half-opened eye, the momentary conscious glance, and the miserable gathering together of the convulsed limbs, hoping that each pang would diminish in agony and that the morning might bring ease and comfort.

“Poor girl, put on thy stifling widow’s weeds,
And ‘scape at once from Hope’s accursed bands!”

We feel utterly incapable of describing, during the progress of this heavy night, the scorching and fiery anguish of his brother Hugh, or the distracted and wailing sorrow of poor Maura. The unexpected and delightful revulsion of feeling produced upon both, especially on the former, by his temporary recovery, now utterly incapacitated them from bearing his relapse with anything like fortitude. The frantic remorse of the guilty man, and the stupid but pungent grief of his sister, appeared but as the symptoms of weak minds and strong passions, when contrasted with the deep but patient affliction of his innocent and uncomplaining wife. She wasted no words in sorrow; for during this hopeless night, self, happiness, affection, hope, were all forgotten in the absorbing efforts at his recovery. Never, indeed, did the miseries and calamities of life draw from the fruitful source of a wife’s attached and faithful heart, a nobler specimen of that pure and disinterested devotion which characterizes woman, than was exhibited by the stricken-hearted Alley Bawn.

There was something in this peculiar case, as, indeed there are in all family occurrences of a similar nature, which induced them to try upon the suffering boy the full extent of their humble skill, rather than call in a strange physician to witness the disastrous, perhaps fatal, effects of domestic violence. Had the cause of Felix’s illness been unknown to Hugh or Maura, they would have procured medical advice in the early part of the night. Let us, however, not press too severely on the repentant brother. Shame, and remorse, and penitence, ought to plead strongly for “the hope deferred that made his heart sick.” Hugh’s passions arose to violence, but not to murder, a distraction which both law and morality too frequently forget to make.

Page 21

When Hugh saw, however, that nothing except medical skill could save him, he forgot his crime and its consequences. Stung to madness by his love of Felix, and his fears for his recovery, he mounted a horse, and had almost broken down the animal by over-exertion, ere he reached the village of B-----, where the doctor he sought lived.

After an impetuous and violent knocking the door was opened, and a man pale and horror-struck entered, whom the doctor was inclined to receive rather as the patient than the messenger. Yes! haggard, wild, yet weak and trembling, he staggered into the room, and, sinking on a seat, in a voice husky and hoarse said—

“Docthor! oh, docthor, you won’t refuse to come! It’s thrue he was my brother—but I had not—I had not—oh—no—no—I had it not in my heart to murdher him! My brother is dyin’. Oh, come, docthor! come to my brother, he’s dyin’, and ’twas I that struck, the blow.”

With a vehemence of grief that was pitiable, and an exhibition of the wildest gestures which characterize despair, he then uttered a cry that rang through the house.

“Oh, Felix agra, my brother, I’m your murdherer! My sister and I are both wealthy—he’s dyin’ docthor—come, come. Oh, agra Felix—agra Felix! To see you well—to see you well—the wealth of the world, if I had it, would go. My life—my life—docthor! Oh, that would be but little—but it, too, would go—I’d give it—all we have, my sister and I, to our blanket—to the shoes on our feet, and the coat and gown on our backs—all—all—you’ll get—if you can save our brother, that I struck down and murdered!”

The doctor, a man of great skill and humanity, immediately ordered his horse, and mounting him, accompanied Hugh to the sick bed of his brother. On arriving there, they found him worse; and never before, nor during his whole professional experience, had the doctor witnessed such a scene. Hugh took his place behind Felix, who, by the doctor’s direction, was placed in a half-sitting, half-recumbent posture in the bed; his arms were placed distractedly about him, his breast was his pillow, and his cheek, wildly and with voracious affection, laid to his. He was restrained from crying aloud, but his groans were enough to wrench the heart from which they proceeded to pieces. Sympathy, in fact, was transferred from the sick boy to his brother; and perhaps more tears were shed by the lookers-on from pity towards Hugh than Felix.

But where was she, the bride and wife of a changeful day—of a day, in which the extremities of happiness and misery met? Oh, where but where she should and ought to be, at his bed-side, hoping against hope, soothing his wild ravings by her soft sweet voice; and when, in his delirium, the happy scene of the past day seemed reacted, then she knelt, ever ready to lead him, by her words and caresses, into a forgetfulness of his present pain. In his desperate struggles he fancied they were tearing

Page 22

her from him; and when the strength of several men could scarce restrain him, then came the mildness of her power. With her gentle hands and her fond, kind words she laid him in peace once more, and, kneeling by his side, cooled his burning temples with her pale fingers, and wetted his parched lips with the draught prescribed by the physician. When the crisis, however, approached, she saw by the keen glance of observant affection, that the doctor's manner betrayed his hopelessness of her husband's recovery. Then did her strength give way, and one violent fit of hysteric sobbing almost broke down her reason and physical powers. Unavailing was all their tenderness, and fruitless every attempt at consolation. Even her own beloved mother failed. "Alley, asthore agruc machree," said she, "don't give way to this, for it's sinful; it's wrong to cry so bitterly for the livin'. You know that while there's life there's hope. God is merciful, and may think fit to pity you, anien machree, and to spare him for the sake of our prayers, that your heart mayn't be broken. Here's the priest, too, an' sure it's a comfort, if the Lord does take him from us, that he's not goin' widout the holy sacraments of the Church, to clear away any stain of sin that may be on him."

Felix, tranquilized by the satisfaction that always results from the consciousness of having received the rites of the Church, yet moved by the deep sobbings of his miserable brother, took his hand, and thus addressed him—

"Hugh dear!"

"Oh, Felix, Felix, Felix darling, if you spake kind to me my brain will turn, and my heart will burst to pieces! Harsh, harsh, avourneen, speak harshly, cruelly, blackly—oh, say you won't forgive me—but no, that I couldn't bear—forgive me in your heart, and before God, but don't spake wid affection to me, for then I'll not be able to bear it."

"Hugh," said Felix, from whose eyes the keenness of his brother's repentance wrung tears, despite his burning agony; "Hugh dear"—and he looked pitifully in the convulsed face of the unhappy man. "Hugh, dear, it was only an accident, for if you had thought—that it would turn out—as it has done——But no matter now—you have my forgiveness—and you deserve it; for Hugh dear, it was as much and more my own thoughtlessness and self-will that caused it. Hugh dear, comfort and support Alley here, and Maura, too, Hugh; be kind to them both for poor Felix's sake." He sank back, exhausted, holding his brother's hand in his left, and his mute heart-broken bride's in his right. A calm, or rather torpor, followed, which lasted until his awakening spirit, in returning consciousness of life and love, made a last effort to dissolve in a farewell embrace upon the pure bosom of his virgin wife.

Page 23

"Alley," said he, "are you not my wife, and amn't I your husband? Whose hand should be upon me—in what arms but yours should I die? Alley, think of your own Felix—oh, don't let me pass altogether out of your memory an' if you'd wear a lock of my hair (many a time you used to curl it over on my cheek, for you used to say it was the same shade as your own, and you used to compare them together), wear it for my sake, next your heart, and if ever you think of doin' a wrong thing, look at it, and you'll remember that Felix, who's now in the dust, always desired you to pray for the Almighty's grace, an' trust to Him for strength against evil. But where are you, asthore? My eyes want a last look of you; I feel you—ay, I feel you in my breakin' heart, and sweet your presence in it, avourneen machree; but how is it that I cannot see you? Oh, my wife, my young wife, my spotless wife, be with me—near me!" He clasped her to his heart, as if while he held her there he thought it could not cease to beat; but in a moment, after one slight shudder, one closing pang, his grasp relaxed—his head fell upon her bosom—and he, Felix, who that morning stood up in the bloom of youth and manly beauty, with the cup of happiness touching his lips, was now a clod of the valley. Half unconscious—almost unbelieving that all could be over, she gently laid him down. On looking into his face, her pale lips quivered; and as her mute wild gaze became fixed upon the body, slowly the desolating truth forced itself upon her heart. She then sank upon her knees, and prayed to God that, if it were His will, and lawful for her in her misery to utter such a prayer, He would not part her in death from him who had been to her far dearer than all that life now contained—without whom the world was now empty to her for ever.

Quietly and calmly she then arose, and but for the settled wretchedness of her look, the stillness of her spirit might have been mistaken for apathy. Without resistance, without a tear, in the dry agony of burning grief she gently gave herself up to the guidance of those who wept, while they attempted to soothe her. In reply to their attempts at consolation she only uttered one brief sentence in Irish. "Oh," said she, "God is good—still, still, this was a dark day to Felix and to me!"

At the inquest which followed, there was no proof to criminate the wretched brother; nor, to speak truly, were the jury anxious to find any. The man's shrieking misery was more wild and frightful than death itself. From "the Dark Day" until this on which I write, he has never been able to raise his heart or his countenance. Home he never leaves, except when the pressure of business compels him; and when he does, in every instance he takes the most unfrequented paths and the loneliest by-roads, in order to avoid the face and eye of man. Better, indeed, to encounter flood or fire, than to suffer what he has borne, when the malicious or coarse-minded have reproached him, in what we trust, is his repentance, with his great affliction.

Page 24

Alley contrary to the earnest solicitations of Hugh and Maura, went back to reside with her mother. Four years have now passed, and the virgin widow is constant to her grief. With a bunch of yarn on her arm, she may be occasionally seen in the next market-town; the chastened sorrow of her look agreeing well with her mournful weeds. In vain is she pressed to mingle in the rustic amusements of her former companions; she cannot do it, even to please her mother; the poor girl's heart is sorrow-struck for ever. She will never smile again. As it is, however, the steady subdued melancholy of her manner increases the respect, without lessening the love, of all who know her. Who, indeed, could see her, and hear her sad history without loving her purity, and her devoted affection to the memory of him that was only the husband of a day, without pitying the stricken girl who suffered so much, and wishing that time, which weans us from our greatest sorrows, may, by its influence, mellow her afflictions, until the bitterness of their spirit passes out of her soul.

Reader, if you want a moral, look upon the wasted brow of Hugh O'Donnell, and learn to restrain your passions and temper within its proper limits.